



Outreach to Parents and Community

Parents and other taxpayers support school libraries financially. What can we do for them in return?

1 Invite them to the library. To make the best use of parent conference days, have your invitation included with the letter sent to parents to schedule their appointments with teachers. Instruct them in the use of the library subscription databases, such as Ebsco or Proquest. Show them how to find the latest issue of their favorite magazine in the "title list." It is especially attractive to have the latest articles available online for free.

2 Show them how to search for subjects, how to do a Boolean search using AND, OR, NOT; how to use truncation: "?" to replace one letter; "" to replace multiple letters. Give them

4 If school policy allows, issue parents their own library card. Give them a brief introduction to the OPAC, and to the location of books in the library.

5 Have parents sign an attendance sheet and write their email address/ phone number, so that you can contact them in the future, as well as comments about the instruction that they have received. Save these accolades in your portfolio for your evaluation.

6 Offer to attend a parent association meeting and present the lessons, as listed above.

7 Start a book club for parents and teachers that meets after school. It's a great tool to build community. Paperback best sellers offer high

The National Library of Medicine Web site would help them to answer their questions about medical conditions and medications. Invite these seniors to come to your school library for a "hands on" session. Many schools promote "Lifelong Learning" in their mission statement, and this project would provide a compelling manifestation of this maxim.

Many parents and seniors would like to learn to evaluate a Web site. Start with the domain: is it a .com/edu/org? Who wrote it, and is the author an expert? What is the purpose of the site? When was the site updated? What is the source of the information? Is the information useful for the reader? Be prepared with examples of "good" and "bad" Web sites.

Turn Goodwill into Good Works

After you have built a sense of community with your adult patrons, you will be in a position to offer them the opportunity to purchase a subscription for your library, or to make a donation of books on your "wish list." Public libraries occasionally receive major gifts from patron estates, and there is no reason that this could not happen for school libraries as well.

These parent and senior citizen library patrons may also be interested in volunteering in your school library. After you have helped them, they may well be ready to offer to assist you with shelving of books, processing of materials, etc.

Take the initiative in library outreach. Do not just wait for patrons to come to you. Offer your resources to people who do not know what is available. Reach out and encourage genuine "Lifelong Learning." ■

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time to explore the databases on their own, and then offer to answer their questions. Parents, especially those with elementary skills, are very grateful to learn at their own pace with assistance available. They will be grateful to learn without having to ask their children for help, and without feeling incompetent.



3 Pass out a printed sheet with all the database passwords for them to take home.

interest and low cost. Have members rotate leading the discussion. Email book reviews to members to prepare for discussion. Promote the Book Club through school publications, in the local newspaper, and on your library Web site.

Outreach to Senior Citizens

Another group of taxpayers to target for library outreach is senior citizens. They often vote against school referendums because they feel that the school doesn't do anything for them. Change their minds! We must market our libraries to constituents. Go to the senior citizen center in your community, and give a demonstration of a database, showing them how to research health topics.

By Barbara Herzog



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